of these banks. Accordingly, Banking Companies (Acquisition and Transfer of Undertakings) and Financial Institutions Laws Amendment Bill, 2000 was introduced in the Lok Sabha. This Bill was referred to the Standing Committee on Finance in December, 2000. The report of the Committee is still awaited.

SHRI K. NATWAR SINGH: Sir, I would like to compliment the hon. Minister for the skilful manner in which he has given the answer because it says much and conveys very little. I just want to know—I am aware of the fact that he is not in-charge of the Standing Committee—whether he has any broad idea as to when the report of the Standing Committee could be expected.

SHRI JASWANT SINGH: Sir, I must understand that the question of public sector banks is not related to the share holding. The public sector banks are not governed by the Company Law. Therefore, irrespective of the amount of share holding there, they do not change their character.

Secondly, this matter is with the Standing Committee on Finance, and unless we receive a direction of advice or guidance from the Standing Committee, there is nothing that we can do as a Government.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Question Hour is over.

WRITTEN ANSWERS TO STARRED QUESTIONS

Delay in tax refunds

*103. SHRI RAJU PARMAR:
SHRI BHAGATRAM MANHAR:

Will the Minister of FINANCE AND COMPANY AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government's attention has been drawn to the news-item captioned, "Inordinate delay in most tax refunds, shows survey", appearing in the Economic Times, New Delhi dated the 24th December, 2002;

(b) if so, the number of cases of refund pending with the Income Tax Department, Delhi as on 31st January, 2003; and

(c) by when all these refund cases are likely to be cleared?

THE MINISTER OF FINANCE AND COMPANY AFFAIRS (SHRI JASWANT SINGH): (a) Yes, Sir.

(b) The total number of refund cases pending with Income Tax Department, Delhi as on 31st January, 2003 was 1,02,125.

(c) All these refund cases are likely to be cleared by the Income Tax authorities by 28th February, 2003.

Exploration of oil and gas in Jwalamukhi basin in H.P.

*110. SHRI ANIL SHARMA: Will the Minister of PETROLEUM AND NATURAL GAS be pleased to state:

(a) the present status of exploration of oil and natural gas in Jwalamukhi basin in Himachal Pradesh by ONGC;

(b) whether any headway has been made in finding oil and gas reserves in the basin; and

(c) if so, the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF PETROLEUM AND NATURAL GAS (SHRI RAM NAIK): (a) Oil and Natural Gas Corporation Ltd. (ONGC) has been carrying out exploration activities in the form of seismic surveys and exploratory drilling in the State of Himachal Pradesh, in Himalayan Foothills Basin encompassing Jwalamukhi area. At present, ONGC is holding Petroleum Exploration Licence (PEL) in one block, namely, Kangra-Mandi Block. Acquisition of Two-Dimensional (2-D) seismic data and drilling of one exploratory well in the Jawalamukhi-Nadaun-Hamirpur area are the exploratory efforts.

(b) No commercial accumulation of hydrocarbons has so far been found in the State of Himachal Pradesh.

(c) Does not arise, in view of reply to part (b) above.